

SDR 40/2014

12 March 2014

## Education Maintenance Allowances awarded in Wales – Update at end of February 2014

This monthly Statistical First Release presents information on the number of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) awarded to students in further education in academic year 2013/14, as at the end of February 2014. The release is based on data provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC) and is correct as at 3 March 2014.

The EMA Wales scheme was introduced for 16 year olds in 2004/05 and extended to include 17 year olds in 2005/06 and finally to include 18 year olds in 2006/07. EMA is a weekly allowance, linked to satisfactory attendance, paid fortnightly to eligible students attending learning centres in Wales.

From the academic year 2011/12, the criteria for new EMA students receiving the £30 award changed, and the £10 and the £20 awards are no longer available. Students new to EMA may qualify for an award of £30 per week, depending on household income and family circumstances. There are no longer any returning students receiving the £10 or £20 EMA awards.

### Key results

As at 28 February 2014, approved applications were down 1 per cent on last year, whilst the total number of applications received was also down by 1 per cent (*Charts 1 and 2*). This is the fourth monthly data point available for applications for 2013/14.

- A total of 31,540 EMA Wales applications had been received for the academic year 2013/14 (*Table 1*).
- 30,010 (95 per cent) of applications received were approved, 790 (3 per cent) were rejected and 705 (2 per cent) were incomplete (*Chart 3, Table 1*).
- Of all approved applications, 19,645 (65 per cent) were from students attending Further Education colleges, 9,700 (32 per cent) were students attending Secondary schools and the remaining 665 (2 per cent) were from other learning centres (*Table 2*).

**We have recently consulted on the future method of releasing these data. Please see para 7 of Notes.**

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**Next Update:** 16 April 2014

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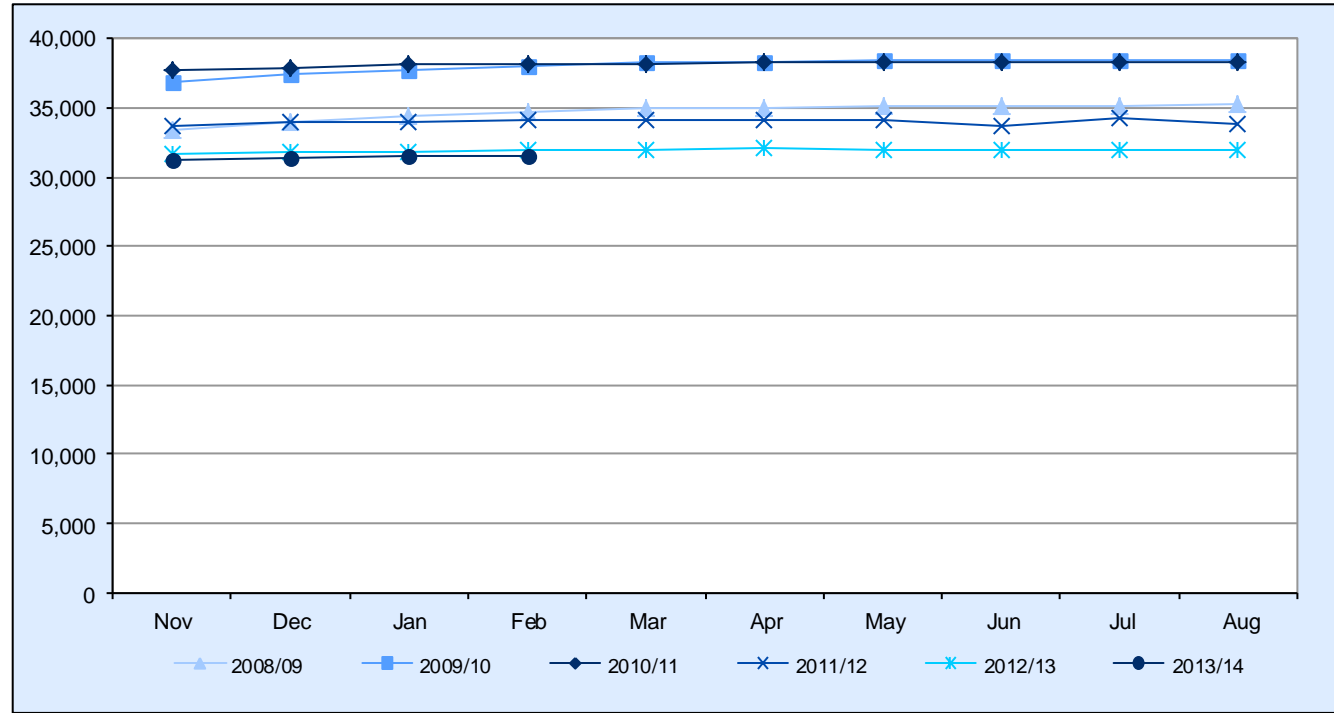
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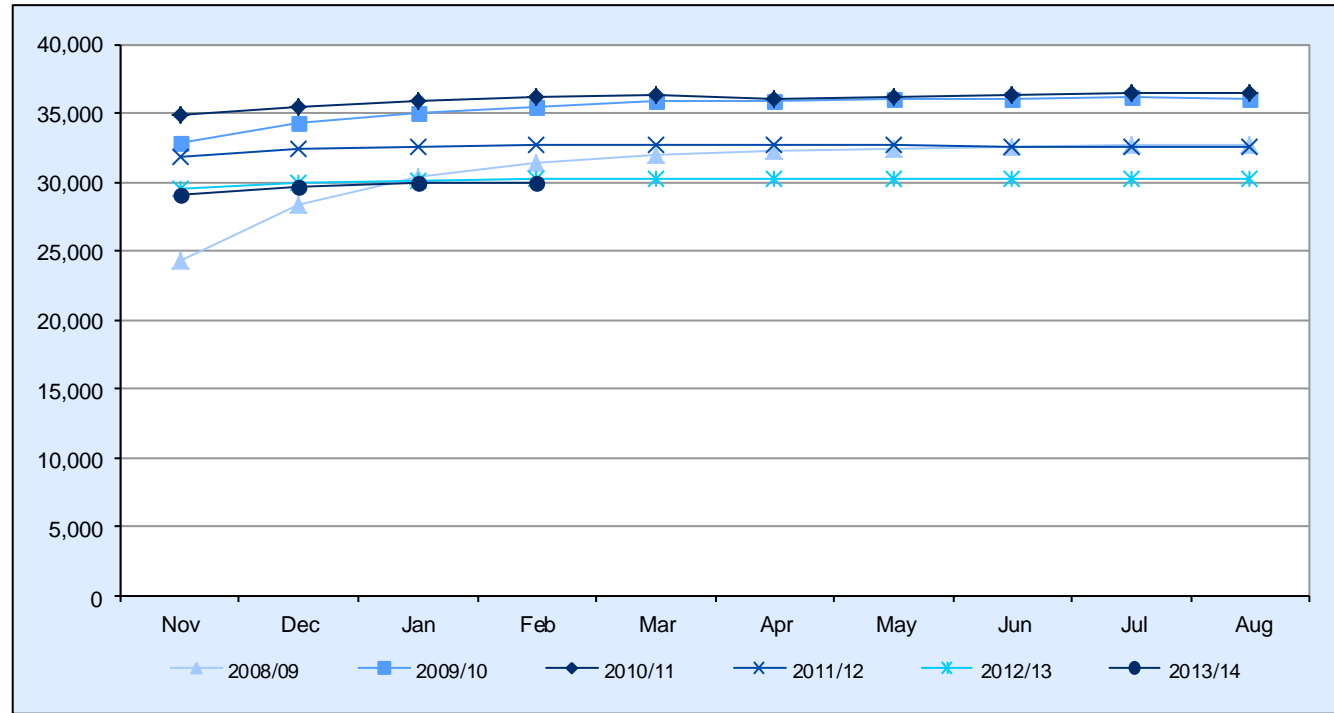
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**Chart 1: Cumulative number of all EMA applications received, by month and year of study (a)**

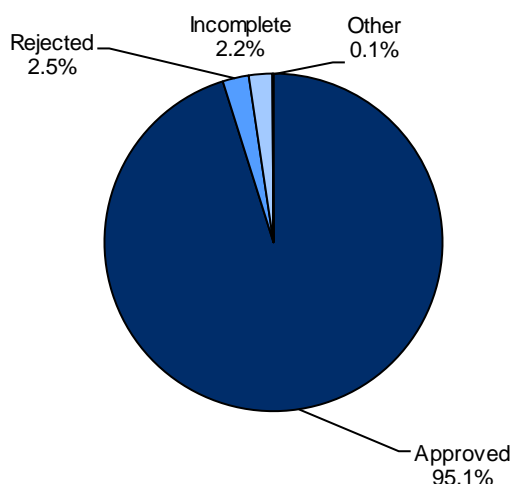


(a) Cumulative figures may fall for a number of reasons, such as applicants dropping out of college, colleges stopping payments for applicants not attending lessons, or applications being reclassified to a different scheme.

**Chart 2: Cumulative number of approved EMA applications, by month and year of study (a)**



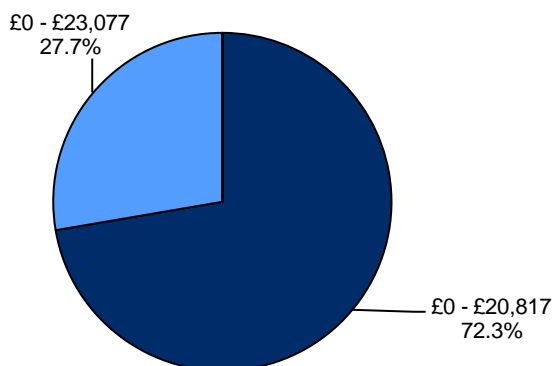
**Chart 3: Total applications received by current work stage for academic year 2013/14, as at 28 February 2014 (a)**



(a) Current work stage denotes the status of the application at 3 March 2014, when the data was extracted from SLC's database.

As at 28 February 2014, 95 per cent of EMA applications received had been approved and 3 per cent had been rejected (*Table 1*). The majority of the remaining applications received were incomplete. These are applications that are either “missing information” (e.g. no date of birth included) or “missing evidence” (e.g. no birth certificate attached).

**Chart 4: Approved applications, by EMA £30 award and threshold levels, as at 28 February 2014(a)**



(a) Current work stage denotes the status of the application at 3 March 2014, when the data was extracted from SLC's database.

As at 28 February 2014, of all applications entitled to EMA, 72 per cent were from applicants with a household income of £20,817 or less (independent students / only child in household), and 28 per cent were from claimants with a household of £23,077 or less (with siblings aged 16 or under in the household / one or more siblings aged 20 or under in full-time education or training and eligible for child benefit in the household).

There were no claimants whose household income was ‘unknown’.

**Table 1: Applications by work stage, as at 28 February 2014 (c)**

Current Work Stage	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Approved	30,655	31,395	35,520	36,150	32,705	30,240	30,010
Rejected	705	710	775	580	685	830	790
Incomplete (a)	1,355	2,275	1,380	1,235	680	865	705
Other (b)	200	300	390	250	10	35	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,915</b>	<b>34,680</b>	<b>38,065</b>	<b>38,210</b>	<b>34,085</b>	<b>31,970</b>	<b>31,540</b>

Source: Student Loans Company

- (a) These include applications that have "missing information" (e.g. no date of birth included) or "missing evidence" (e.g. no birth certificate attached).
- (b) These include applications that are in one of the following work stages: assessed; awaiting rejection; data capture incomplete; failed assessment; validated; verified (as defined by SLC).
- (c) From the academic year 2011/12, the criteria for new EMA students receiving the £30 award changed, and the £10 and £20 awards are no longer available.

**Table 2: Approved applications, by EMA £30 award, for academic year 2013/14 by learning centre type and gender, as at 28 February 2014**

	Males	Females	Total
Further Education College:	9,565	10,080	19,645
Secondary School:	4,405	5,295	9,700
Other Learning Centre:	410	255	665
All Learning Centres:	14,380	15,630	30,010

Source: Student Loans Company

\* The data item is disclosive for publication

## Annex 1: Notes

### 1. Context

#### 1.1 Policy/operational context

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a scheme providing young people who wish to continue in education after school leaving age with an incentive to earn awards through good attendance and achieving agreed objectives. Changes to this scheme were introduced from September 2011, further details are provided here: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/101109emaen.pdf>

These monthly releases aim to provide high level operational updates on the EMA application process.

#### 1.2 Eligibility criteria, 2013/14

A student has a general entitlement to receive an EMA if:

##### *Student criteria*

- the student is aged 16, 17 or 18 years old<sup>1</sup> on 31 August 2013.
- the student has a bank or building society current account.
- the student meets the nationality/residency criteria.

##### *Course criteria*

- the student is studying full-time at a school; or studying at least 12 guided hours a week at a recognised further education institution/other learning centre.
- the student is studying an academic or vocational course up to and including level 3. Eligible academic or vocational course include GCSEs, A-Levels, BTECs, NVQs, GNVQs and Basic Skills courses.
- the student is studying an eligible course that lasts at least 10 weeks.

##### *Household income criteria*

Evidence of household income in the prior tax year determines whether a student will be eligible for an EMA.

New students started either in 2011/12, 2012/13 or 2013/14 may qualify for an award of £30 per week. There are two different household income thresholds, which are based on the student's family circumstances. Students will not be able to receive EMA if their household income is above the threshold levels.

Students new to EMA from 2011/12 onwards (eligible for the £30 award only)

Family circumstances	Household income threshold
You are the only dependant child in the household	£0 - £20,817
You have one or more dependants aged 16 or under in the household	£0 - £23,077
You have one or more dependants aged 20 or under in full-time education or training and eligible for child benefit in the household	£0 - £23,077

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<sup>1</sup> Entitlement may be extended to 19 year olds if they have not already received 3 years of EMA.

## **2. Data source**

EMA applications and payments are administered by the Student Loans Company (SLC). Data held on EMA students is entered by SLC staff onto an administrative database for the purpose of assessing and paying EMA to students. This data is also stored in a management information data warehouse for the purpose of management reporting, operational performance reporting, audit of processes, statistics, future policy planning and forecasting. Further details of SLC's administrative sources will be published on [SLC's web page](#) later this year. Processes and systems which enable customer and application assessment data to be held electronically are subject to periodic audit and integrity checks. SLC Internal Audit ensure that the processes governing data entry and application assessment are adhered to. Data integrity validation rules are used to identify and correct errors in data. Management Information extracted from SLC systems are subject to quality assurances prior to distribution.

The data in this release were collected via the SLC management information system and were extracted on 3 March 2014. All information is based on applications received by 28 February 2014.

## **3. Definitions**

### **3.1 Change in applicant circumstances**

The data represented in this release refer to applicants' most recent learning agreement. Therefore if an applicant has attended more than one type of learning centre or has received different values of weekly payments, to avoid double-counting, they are only included under their most recent status.

## **4. Rounding strategy**

Figures in this release have been rounded to the nearest 5. Due to rounding, the sums of some rows or columns may not add to the total figure given. Numbers less than 5, but not zero, are represented by '\*'.

## **5. Key Quality Information**

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

### **5.1 Relevance**

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Officials in the Welsh Government;
- Other government departments;
- Further Education Institutions, Work-Based Learning providers, schools and local authorities;
- Wales Audit Office;
- Students, researchers, academics and universities;
- Individual citizens, private companies, and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- to inform and evaluate the education policy-making process in Wales;
- to forecast future expenditure of student support schemes in Wales.

### **5.2 Accuracy**

Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the Student Loans Company before tables are published. The updated monthly figures for the current academic year are correct at the time of publication. They are subject to revisions following further SLC processing, for example due to applications being re-classified from EMA to "Pathways to Apprenticeships" or vice versa. See "Further Information" for more details.

### 5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

For 2013/14 this is the fourth monthly publication on the number of EMA applications and relates to applications up until the end of February 2014. Monthly updates during a given academic year relate to data from the end of November each month until the end of July and are published as soon as possible, a few weeks following the end of a given month, and according to a planned and pre-announced series of publication dates. Final data for 2013/14 will be published in September 2014, and the final publication will include more detailed data tables.

### 5.4 Accessibility and Clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

### 5.5 Comparability

For the academic year 2004/05 only students aged 16 at the start of the academic year were eligible to receive an EMA. The scheme was extended to 17 year olds for the 2005/06 academic year and finally 18 year olds in 2006/07. Therefore comparability between years varies, and before 2006/07 should be restricted to comparisons. Figures from 2006/07 onwards are comparable with each other.

The data used for the cumulative number of EMA Wales applications as reported on the StatsWales website are now taken from the SLC via their management information system, which are based on the same definitions used for the September Statistical First Release, which was not the case in years prior to 2009/10.

Data for 2011/12 will only be comparable with previous years' data from November onwards. This is due to a change in the Student Loans Company's procedure for renewing EMA applications for existing students, which first came into affect in academic year 2010/11.

From academic year 2011/12, students new to EMA can qualify for an award of £30 per week, depending on household income. Students who received EMA in 2010/11 who are returning to education and meet the same eligibility criteria as for 2010/11 will continue to get their EMA, be it for £10, £20 or £30 per week. No further bonus payments (previously paid in September, January and July) will be made to any students.

Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own EMA schemes. EMA closed to new applicants in England from 1 January 2011.

The reported number of academic year 2011/12 approved EMA applications dropped between March and April 2012. This is due to the annual exercise carried out by SLC to sample check a proportion of those returning EMA applicants who have chosen to self certify their income, and SLC will assess the application against the applicants' previous years income evidence. If the applicant later fails to provide evidence of household income (if requested), they will be assumed to be no longer be eligible for support.

## 6. Further Information

Updates providing the number of EMA applications during 2013/14 will be published monthly, and will be found on the [Statistics for Wales](#) website.

Comparable monthly data for previous academic years (similar to Table 1 of this Release) can be found in the StatsWales table on [cumulative totals of applications for EMA](#) (please note that monthly data for 2013/14 are subject to change – see “Revisions Policy” – and should be treated as provisional until final figures are published in September 2014). Please note that monthly 2009/10 data are confirmed as final (as at 31 August 2010) in [cumulative totals of applications for EMA](#) table, and will therefore differ slightly to what is seen in Table 1 of this Release, as these figures were those correct as at 31 July 2010.

Further detailed information on EMA applications for academic years 2004/05 to 2010/11 (similar to Table 2 of this Release) can be found in the StatsWales table on [approved EMA applications by LEA](#).

The latest final EMA Statistical First Release, for academic year 2012/13, was published in September 2013. The provisional Statistical First Release, which had previously been published in

January, was discontinued due to more detailed data now being published within this monthly release. Please contact us if you have further queries on the data published.

Further information about the EMA scheme can be found at [www.StudentFinanceWales.co.uk](http://www.StudentFinanceWales.co.uk).

## **7. Future of this Release**

A consultation containing [Proposals relating to Official Statistics](#) has recently been closed. This included proposals to stop publishing the monthly EMA and Student Support Applications for Higher Education statistical first releases, but ensure that monthly data will still be available through [StatsWales](#) and accessible to all users. Less frequent statistical releases will be published. We appreciate any feedback from users (see contact details below).

## **8. Related articles**

The final EMA Statistical First Release for academic year 2012/13 is available via the following link:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/ema-awarded-wales/?lang=en>

The Scottish Government publish statistics on EMA in the academic year 2011/12:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00413124.pdf> (pdf file)

Statistical Releases on other strands of student support in Wales are available via the following link:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/student-support-higher-education/?lang=en>

## **User Feedback**

We want to engage with users of our statistics and we invite you to send your comments on the publication to [post16ed.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:post16ed.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

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